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SUBSIDIARY ORGANS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE (PARAGRAPH 7 OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE)

Previous work in UNCTAD on tungsten and iron ore

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

1. The concept of the establishment of specific intergovernmental bodies containing both producers and consumers to review and follow developments in respect of specific mineral and metal commodities began with the United Nations Exploratory Meeting on Lead and Zinc, which led in November 1958 to the convening of the United Nations Conference on Lead and Zinc and the creation of the International Lead and Zinc Study Group in January 1960. The Group was an autonomous body initially located at the United Nations Headquarters in New York and serviced by the staff of the United Nations in New York, the latter function subsequently being assumed by UNCTAD, on a cost-sharing basis. Since the late 1960s, the Group has had its own secretariat and has been located in London, United Kingdom.

Committee on Tungsten

2. In the case of tungsten, an exploratory meeting in 1962 culminated in the establishment in January 1963 of the United Nations Ad hoc Committee on Tungsten. The first meeting of the Ad hoc Committee on Tungsten was held in June 1963. As a result of the creation of UNCTAD, Governments agreed in May 1965 that the Ad hoc Committee on Tungsten should become a standing body of UNCTAD. It became the Committee on Tungsten, which reported to the

Committee on Commodities. The terms of reference of the Committee were very general, namely: "provides opportunities for international consultations concerning trade in tungsten, promotes the improvement of statistics on tungsten and follows developments in the tungsten market". In December 1984, the Committee on Tungsten established a sessional working group specifically to review the current market situation and short-term outlook.

3. In the early years of its existence, the Committee on Tungsten examined possible stabilization measures. Between 1966 and 1973, the Committee paid particular attention to the improvement of tungsten statistics and to the examination of market trends. Subsequently, it reverted to the issue of stabilisation of the market for tungsten. Since 1980, the Committee has given prominence to the analysis and assessment of the market situation and outlook and to special studies on factors influencing the market. In 1991, after its designation as an eligible International Commodity Body (ICB) by the Common Fund for Commodities, the Committee began to examine project proposals presented to it, for possible submission to the Common Fund, on research and development in the area of tungsten.

4. There have been 23 sessions of the Committee on Tungsten. A quarterly Bulletin of Tungsten Statistics is published, covering prices, production, consumption, trade and stocks.

Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Iron Ore

5. Following a series of preparatory meetings in UNCTAD involving iron ore producing and consuming countries, Governments decided to set up an Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Iron Ore for a trial period of two years (1986 and 1987) to undertake the activities performed by a study group. In March 1990, the Trade and Development Board decided, in the light of this experience, that "UNCTAD's work on iron ore should be maintained and that regular intergovernmental meetings of experts should be convened, with the participation of industry advisers, to exchange views on the iron ore situation and to review and enhance iron ore statistics".[1]

6. The work on iron ore in UNCTAD has focused on:

* providing a regular dialogue between producers and consumers;
* improving statistics and market transparency;
* reviewing and monitoring the market situation and outlook for iron ore; and,
* exchanging views about issues of concern to the iron ore industry world-wide.

7. There have been five sessions of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Iron Ore. They have involved the active participation of experts who are policy-makers in government and industry. The UNCTAD secretariat publishes, on a regular basis, statistics on production, consumption, trade and stocks of iron ore.

[1] Board decision 382 (XXXVI).